A PICTURE

of

THE FEMALE CHARACTER,

AS IT OUGHT TO APPEAR

WHEN FORMED.

BY GEORGE HORNE, D.D.
late Bishop of Norwich.

PRINTED BY G. NICHOLSON AND CO.
Palace-street, Manchester.
Sold by T. KNOTT, No. 47, Lombard-street;
and CHAMPANTE & WHITROW, Jewry-street, London.
1794.

BRITISH MUSEUM
15 61
JUL

The pi
has tha
hand ne
I mean
wisest
Proverb
tresses s
to read.
" Wi
" is far
but not
is well
more to
the brig
" Th
" so tha
nurture
fidelity
and her
sent, as
for the
the dea
steward
goes for

THE FEMALE CHARACTER,

The picture I shall present, among other advantages, has that of antiquity. It was drawn by a masterly hand near three thousand years ago. The description I mean, is that, left us of a virtuous woman, by the wisest of men, in the last chapter of the book of Proverbs; a description which all mothers and mistresses should teach the female pupils under their care, to read, and learn by heart.

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price "is far above rubies." Such an one is to be found, but not without care and diligence in the search. She is well worth the pains taken in the forming her, and more to be valued by her happy possessor, than all the brightest diamonds in the mines of the east.

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, "so that he shall have no need of spoil." A well nurtured woman is man's best and truest friend. Her fidelity is inviolable as the covenant of the most High, and her purity unsullied as the light of heaven. Absent, as well as present, her husband relies upon her, for the preservation of his possessions, and of herself, the dearest and most precious of all. With such a steward at home, freed from care and anxiety, he goes forth to his own employment, whatever it may

be. He has no occasion to rob others by sea or land; to plunder provinces, or starve nations. Instead of her squandering his substance to gratify her own vanity and folly, the economy of his wife furnishes the supplies, and nothing is wanting in due time and place.

"She will do him good, and not evil, all the days "of her life." She will never abuse this confidence reposed in her, but endeavour to render herself daily more and more worthy of it. And even if her endeavours should not always meet with the desired success; if the good man should sometimes happen to be a little out of spirits, or out of temper, she will not therefore become so too. Her cheerfulness will revive and restore him. She will still "do him good, and not evil," while he lives; and if she survive him, will continue to shew the same kind attention and regard to his family, and to his character. "My Ser-"vius," (said the Roman Valeria, holding in her arms the urn which contained the ashes of her husband—my Servius) "though dead to the rest of the "world, can never be otherwise than alive to me."

Solomon's description of a virtuous woman consists of twenty-two verses. It is well worthy your observation, that eleven of these verses (half the number) are taken up in setting forth her *industry*, and the effects of it. I shall recite all these together, that you may see what a variety of magnificent language is made use of, to describe her different employments, to recommend simplicity of manners, and make good housewifery and honest labour to be admired, in the rich and noble, as well as the poor and obscure among women. For you must bear in mind, that in works of the several kinds here mentioned, queens and princesses, of old time, disdained not to be occupied. You will likewise be pleased to consider, that if the rich are exempted from the necessity of working for *themselves*, they cannot be better employed than in working for

the *poor*; since "the coats and garments," made by the charity of Dorcas, were judged the best proofs of her goodness that could be submitted to the inspection of an apostle.

"She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She riseth also, while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for they are all clothed with double garments. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry, her clothing is silk and purple. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles to the merchant. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She is like the merchants' ships, she bringeth her food from afar. She considereth a field and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard."——On account of this her marvellous and unceasing diligence, with the many and great advantages derived thereby to her family, well may it be said, as it is said of her, "Strength and honour are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come."

But the honour is not confined to herself. It extendeth to her friend and her companion in life; "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land."—That is, he is known as *her* husband; as a man blessed with such a wife; as indebted, perhaps, for his promotion, to the wealth acquired by her management at home (for honours are seldom open to the poor); for the splendor and elegance of his apparel, to the labour of her hands; and, it may be, for the preservation and establishment of his virtue and integrity, to the encour-

agement, in all that is holy, and just, and good, furnished by her example, as well as by her conversation, the nature of which is thus described—

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her "tongue is the law of kindness." She thinks before she speaks; and, therefore neither introduces a bad subject, nor disgraces a good one by an improper manner of discoursing upon it. And as charity reigns in her heart, nothing that is uncharitable proceeds out of her mouth: all is lenient and healing. To express the whole in a few words, she says nothing that is foolish, and nothing that is illnatured. But her charity is shewn in deeds as well as words—

"She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she "reacheth forth her hands to the needy." This is yet another good effect of her economy and management. She is not only able to provide plentifully for her household, but has always something in store for the poor. Since what avails a charitable disposition, where vanity, folly, and extravagance have taken away the power to exert it? In vain is "the hand stretch-"ed out," when there is nothing in it.

Having thus considered this finished character of the virtuous woman, we shall not be surprised at the praise bestowed upon it, in the remaining verses of the chapter.

"Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her "husband also, and he praiseth her," saying, "Ma-"ny daughters have done virtuously; but thou excel-"lest them all." Happy the children of such a mother; they will be living proofs of the care taken by her in their education, when she taught them to walk by the paths of honour and virtue, to the mansions of rest and glory. Happy the husband of such a wife who sees all things prosper under her direction, and the blessing of heaven derived to his family through her. They will all join in proclaiming, that among women who do well, honour is chiefly due to the vir-

tuous and diligent wife, the affectionate and sensible mother.

"Favour," or rather, "Gracefulness is deceitful, "and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the "Lord, she shall be praised." A graceful person, and a set of fine features, are valuable things, but they are not always to be trusted; they may conceal tempers and dispositions very different from those one should have expected to find: and bitterer than wormwood must then be the disappointment of the man, who has been directed in his choice by no other considerations. This, I say, *may* be the case. Let us hope it is not often so. God forbid it should. The face ought to be an index to the mind, and when all is fair without, as it is said of the king's daughter in the psalm, "all should be glorious within." But let beauty have it's due praise, and suppose what you will of it—suppose all that the poets say of it be true: still, the wise man tells you, it is *vain*, it is in it's nature transient, fleeting, perishing; it is the flower of the spring which must fade in Autumn; and when the blossom falls, if no fruit succeed, of what value, I pray you, is the tree? The grave is already opening for the most elegant person that moves, and the worms are in waiting to feed on the fairest face that is beholden. Labour, then, for that which endureth for ever: let your chief pains be bestowed on that part of the human composition, which shall flourish in immortal youth, when the world and all that is in it shall disappear, and come no more into mind.—"A "woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

"Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her "own works praise her in the gates."

The crown, which her own hands have thus formed, shall be placed upon her head, as it were by general consent, even in this life, and her good deeds, celebrated in the public assemblies, shall diffuse an odour grateful as the smell of Eden, as the cloud of frankin-

cense ascending from the holy altar. When her task is ended, the answer of a good conscience, and the blessings all around, sweeter than the sweetest music, shall chant her to her repose; till awakened on the great morning of the world, descending angels shall introduce this daughter of Jerusalem into the joy of her Lord.

Such is the female character, and such the importance of forming it by education. Without education it cannot be formed; for we are all born equally ignorant, and are what we are by instruction.

END OF
BISHOP HORNE'S PICTURE OF THE
FEMALE CHARACTER.